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Report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan**

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with Executive Board decision 2001/23 (E/ICEF/2001/6/Rev.1) on the programme of work for Board sessions in 2002, adopted at the second regular session in December 2001. The report presents a status report on the UNICEF evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) covering the years 2002-2005 (E/ICEF/2001/13 and Corr.1).

Following the introduction, chapter II provides the background to the report. An overview of the evaluation system in UNICEF and the accountability framework for evaluation are presented in chapter III. Recent measures taken to strengthen the evaluation function are described in chapter IV. The proposal for a multi-year evaluation plan in support of the MTSP is presented in chapter V. Chapter VI contains a draft recommendation for Executive Board approval.

* E/ICEF/2002/9.

** The need for extensive consultation within the secretariat delayed the submission of the present report.

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I. Introduction

1. At its second regular session of 2001, in approving the programme of work for its sessions in 2002, the Executive Board requested the secretariat to prepare a report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2002-2005 (E/ICEF/2001/13 and Corr.1) for its 2002 annual session (E/ICEF/2001/6/Rev.1, decision 2001/23).

2. The Executive Board last considered a report on the evaluation function, entitled "Overall progress in the implementation of evaluation activities in UNICEF" (E/ICEF/1992/L.9), at its 1992 regular session (E/ICEF/1992/14, decision 1992/24). In response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), the secretariat submits annually to the Board at its annual session a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major evaluations of country programmes, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustments in the country programmes. In addition, the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board on evaluation matters in part II of her annual report. In 1999, the Executive Board decided that starting from 2000, information in part II of the Executive Director's report should be presented in a way that facilitates monitoring of progress in achieving the objectives of the programmes and activities within the framework of the organizational priorities in the medium-term plan (MTP) for the period 1998-2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1 and E/ICEF/1999/7/Rev.1, decision 1999/7).

II. Overview

A. Background

3. In decision 1992/24, the Executive Board reaffirmed its decision 1990/4 (E/ICEF/1990/13) that a past review of evaluations and their use, as well as a summary of the evaluation plan and structure, be included in all country programmes. In that same decision, the Executive Board also decided the following: that this evaluation plan include evaluations in all programme areas assisted; that in addition to being a project-focused effort, evaluation at the country programme level should increasingly address programme-level activities; that UNICEF should make available an enhanced evaluation database to monitor evaluation implementation and to facilitate the learning process; that the necessary financial and staff resources be available for implementing evaluation plans and for monitoring the use of results; that a three- or four-year rolling evaluation plan be established; that joint evaluations with donors be intensified; and that collaboration on evaluation be strengthened with Governments in order to address the capacity-building and institutional-strengthening requirements through the country programme and that priority in this regard be given to sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Pursuant to Executive Board decisions and recommendations from external auditors' reports and the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF (E/ICEF/1993/CRP.7), the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, announced the formation of the Evaluation and Research Office in his Executive Directive of June 1993 (CF/EXD/1993-006). That decision was taken to better reflect the commitment of UNICEF to strengthening national capacities for essential national research for

children and women. It also reflected measures for strengthening the overall evaluation capacity of UNICEF and improvement of the function in support of programme planning.

5. The Executive Board, during its annual session of June 1998, approved the new organization of UNICEF (E/ICEF/Organization/Rev.3 of 24 April 1998) in the context of the implementation of management excellence as well as of the 1998-1999 biennial support budget. UNICEF headquarters was reorganized to focus on strategic, policy, advocacy and oversight functions. This was done taking into account that UNICEF had always been a decentralized, field-based organization and that headquarters structures worked together to best support and strengthen country programmes and the effective delivery of the UNICEF mission. The Evaluation, Policy and Planning (EPP) Division was created to provide technical leadership in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational performance in monitoring the global situation of the child; to ensure that the results of evaluations were fed into the development of organizational policies and strategies; to analyse the impact of social and economic trends and policies on children; and to coordinate strategic planning and the development of MTPs for the organization. As a consequence of the reorganization, the Office of Evaluation and Research became a unit of EPP.

6. In December 2001, in the context of the approval of the MTSP (decision 2001/22) and the 2002-2003 biennial support budget (E/ICEF/2001/AB/L.10 and decision 2001/13), the Executive Board endorsed the reorganization of the headquarters Programme Group based on the results achieved and experience gained from the former structures. Responding to the need to use the evaluation function more strategically and to provide technical support to fortify performance assessment, the Evaluation Office was given the status of a separate office with increased resources, reporting to the Deputy Executive Director, Programme and Strategic Planning. This measure also enables UNICEF to be more in conformity with international professional standards regarding the positioning of the Evaluation Office within the organization.

B. Evaluation in the context of the medium-term strategic plan

7. The MTSP combines a reinforced results-based management approach and a human rights-based approach to programming. Building on the lessons learned from implementation of the MTP, the new plan establishes five organizational priorities, more clearly defines objectives and indicators, and strengthens the strategic use of the evaluation function. For the first time, a plan has been proposed for the evaluation of the MTSP.

8. The MTSP indicates that evaluation will focus more on the country programme level and on institutional management of the organization as a whole. It will look at the rationale, effectiveness and administrative efficiency and economy of activities undertaken or supported by UNICEF. Evaluation will support accountability and results-oriented performance.

9. Country programme evaluations will gradually be strengthened. During the first two years of the MTSP, the Evaluation Office will develop basic principles and methodologies and conduct a limited number of field tests, taking into account

previous work on the subject. From the third year of the MTSP, regional offices will gradually assume responsibilities in this regard.

10. A special effort has been made to formulate the MTSP so that organizational priorities express the strategic intents pursued from an institutional perspective and so that indicators serve as benchmarks for the assessment of organizational performance. At the end of the third year of the four-year period, a review of the implementation of the MTSP will assess progress made towards the organizational priorities. MTRs and major evaluations of country programmes will inform this review. Lessons learned from the review will be used for the development of the next MTSP.

11. The evaluation plan for the duration of the MTSP will cover key themes and topics of strategic significance. The organizational priorities of the MTSP will guide the selection of thematic evaluations to be undertaken at country, regional and global levels. Such evaluations will be conducted with an emphasis on programmes, strategies and policies. Topical evaluations will address a variety of cross-cutting themes as well as UNICEF organizational effectiveness. Implementation of the evaluation plan will, in some cases, involve partnerships with other United Nations agencies and/or governmental and non-governmental organizations. Findings will be stored in an on-line electronic database, and learning workshops will be part of the dissemination of evaluation results.

III. UNICEF evaluation system

A. Evaluation within the performance monitoring and oversight framework of UNICEF

12. During the third regular session of 1997, the Executive Board endorsed the framework of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for performance monitoring and oversight (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.12 and E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1, decision 1997/28). Performance monitoring and oversight were major themes throughout the management excellence process in UNICEF. Their purpose is to ensure high quality and responsive programmes through the responsible use of resources for the maximum benefit of children and women.

13. Performance monitoring and oversight feature in all aspects of UNICEF work. The UNICEF system of oversight is a cyclical process involving assessment of programme and operational performance against organizational priorities and objectives generated by the planning process. The answer to the question "How are we performing against what we set out to achieve?" is obtained through "performance monitoring", a management function carried out in offices throughout UNICEF, and "oversight", separate independent mechanisms to assess programme and operational performance.

14. The fulfilment of accountabilities within UNICEF is assessed through a dual system of performance monitoring and oversight. Performance monitoring includes all tasks associated with supervision. It is a management function assigned at all levels of the organization. Oversight of these management functions is maintained through independent internal audit and investigative functions carried out within UNICEF, and by mandated external bodies within the United Nations system.

Implementation of accepted recommendations from oversight activities is then, in turn, a responsibility of line management.

15. The evaluation function in UNICEF is both a mechanism for providing oversight at country, regional and headquarters locations and an instrument that allows organizational learning through the identification of lessons and good practices. Evaluations are conducted as a component of performance monitoring to assess whether UNICEF programmes achieve their objectives and are effective and relevant, and to distil lessons for improved programming, strategic planning and policy development. Evaluations are also commissioned by the Evaluation Office as a component of the independent oversight activities of UNICEF.

16. The research function also contributes to organizational learning and knowledge acquisition. It enhances effectiveness during the design of approaches, policies, strategies and programmes. Research is concerned with testing and understanding basic models and approaches, and is based on scientific methodologies. In UNICEF, the Innocenti Research Centre, Programme Division, the Division of Policy and Planning and country offices conduct research studies and contribute to organizational learning.

17. Thus, the evaluation function is one of many functions within the performance monitoring and oversight system. Evaluation is not an inspection, nor is it an audit. It should not be confused with monitoring, which is a management function of self-assessment and reporting. Evaluation should not be expected to yield scientific findings such as those emanating from fundamental research.

B. Purpose of the evaluation function

18. In the Secretary-General's bulletin on the regulations governing the methods of evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8) issued on 19 April 2000, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/236 of 23 December 1999 and its decision 54/74 of 7 April 2000, the objectives of evaluation are defined in regulation 7.1:

(a) To determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives;

(b) To enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives.

19. The report on the "Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF" stated that "the evaluation function in UNICEF is both a mechanism for providing oversight at country, regional and headquarters locations and an instrument that allows organizational learning through the identification of lessons and good practices" (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.12, paragraph 4).

20. Hence, the evaluation function has many purposes. Evaluation is essentially about identifying and understanding results and their impacts, aiming at the provision of useful information and best alternatives to inform *decision-making*. Its intent is to enable learning-by-doing, thus improving results-oriented activities by *re-engineering* ongoing activities or improving the design of new ones. The formative evaluation process is participatory and is an *empowerment* tool fostering

fairness and impartiality, enlarging the potential for consensus-building. Finally, evaluation is about *accountability* because it focuses on results achieved or not achieved and on explaining what has been achieved and why. It shows what decisions/actions were taken in light of what happened. Most of all, it enables the provision of information on results and learning to stakeholders and the public.

21. In summary, evaluation is the function that examines a policy, a strategy, a programme or an activity/project by asking the following questions: Are we doing the right thing? Are we doing it right? Are there better ways of doing it? It answers the first question by proceeding with a reality check, by examining the rationale or justification, and by assessing relevance in relationship to the fulfilment of rights. The second question is answered by examining effectiveness through the lenses of the pertinence of the results achieved and by assessing efficiency with the review of the optimization of the use of resources. The third question is dealt with by identifying and comparing alternatives, by seeking best practices and by providing relevant lessons learned.

22. Professional experience and learning point to the following six key characteristics for good evaluations:

(a) *Impartiality*: neutrality and transparency of the evaluation process, analysis and reporting;

(b) *Credibility*: professional expertise, methodological rigour, participation and transparency;

(c) *Usefulness*: timeliness for decision-making, and clear and concise presentation of relevant facts;

(d) *Participation*: reflection of different interests, needs and perceptions, and sharing among stakeholders;

(e) *Feedback*: systematic dissemination of findings to stakeholders and use in decision-making;

(f) *Value-for-money*: value-added outweighs the costs.

C. Findings from the peer review

23. In December 2000, a peer review was conducted of the evaluation function in UNICEF. The heads of evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Bank, as well of the Director of the Office of Internal Audit, proceeded with a comparative examination of the evaluation function. The review concluded with the following findings:

(a) There is a lack of a common set of norms and standards that govern evaluation functions within the United Nations system in spite of the General Assembly resolution requesting harmonization;

(b) The introduction of results-based methodologies has significant implications, and the traditional oversight approaches need to be reassessed;

(c) Country programme evaluations need to be recognized as a unit of evaluation;

(d) The issue of attribution needs to be revisited in the context of partnership approaches;

(e) The role and level of central evaluation offices respond to different organizational expectations within the United Nations system; some are independent, while others are twinned with audit or other oversight functions;

(f) Most evaluation units within the United Nations system are more centralized and many are oriented to policy-making, whereas evaluation in UNICEF has been oriented towards programme guidance.

24. The peer review also referred to the principles for evaluation of development assistance issued in 1991 (OECD/GD(91)208) and reassessed in 1998 by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (DAC/OECD). These principles reveal a strong consensus among the heads of evaluation of the bilateral agencies on the following principles:

(a) Agencies should have an evaluation policy with clearly established guidelines and methods, and with a clear definition of its role and responsibilities and its place in the organizational structure;

(b) The evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy-making and the delivery and management of development assistance;

(c) The evaluation process must be as open as possible, with the results made widely available;

(d) For evaluations to be useful, they must be used; feedback to both policy makers and operational staff is essential;

(e) Partnership with recipients and donor cooperation in evaluation are both essential; they are an important aspect of in-country institutional-building and coordination, and may reduce administrative burdens on countries;

(f) Evaluation and its requirements must be an integral part of planning from the start; clear identification of the objectives that an activity is to achieve is an essential prerequisite for any evaluation.

D. Stratification of the evaluation system

25. In UNICEF, there are three levels where results are being achieved. They are: the local activity or project level; the country programme of cooperation level; and the organizational management level, including the organization's own organizational performance. These levels correspond well with the accountability framework reflected in the organization of UNICEF (E/ICEF/Organization/Rev.3). For each level, there is a management cycle consisting of the five phases of planning, programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

26. At the activity/project level, a diagnosis of the need is made and an expected result answering to the identified need is articulated as the objective of the project/activity, together with performance indicators and risk assumptions. This is the planning phase that is completed in tandem with the programming phase. The latter consists of the preparation of an explicit work breakdown structure, a schedule of events, a budget and a matrix of accountability related to the undertaking of each

task, as well as the overall management of the activity/project. Implementation is carried out by the programme partners, contractors, or directly by UNICEF staff. Monitoring ensures the measurement of progress and reports the gaps, enabling the orientation of activity/project implementation according to the plan or the realignment of the activity in order to maximize impact and optimize the use of resources. At this level, evaluation is used, in a participatory fashion, to examine results, the relevance of the activity/project design in light of the needs, the effectiveness and sustainability of the effects, the efficiency of management, and economy in the use of resources for the purpose of informing decision-making and learning.

27. The results management framework at the level of the country programme of cooperation also entails the same five management phases. During the planning phase, a situation analysis is conducted, the rights-based approach reveals the gaps and areas of priority, alternative interventions are considered, and a programme proposal is structured and submitted to the Executive Board for approval. During the programming phase, an integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (IMEP) is prepared. The IMEP process strengthens the rights-based and results-oriented focus of the master plan of operations. The IMEP makes explicit the objectives tree of the country programme; identifies the key performance indicators and risks; and provides a systematic approach to monitoring, evaluation and research in support of programme management. Implementation is monitored by means of annual country programme reports and periodic audits. The regional directors report annually to the Executive Board on MTRs and major evaluations of country programmes. Formal comprehensive evaluations of country programmes of cooperation now being piloted are expected to be conducted more systematically in the future.

28. At the level of the organizational management of UNICEF activities, the same five management phases are being put in place with more rigour. The MTSP is the business plan of the institutional priorities of UNICEF. It is based on a diagnosis emanating from the end-decade review and the global needs expressed by member countries in international forums that have led to the setting of global targets such as the Millennium Development Goals. The multi-year funding framework integrates the major areas of action, resources, budget and outcomes, in compliance with Executive Board decision 1999/8. Annual reports submitted by the Executive Director to the Executive Board provide progress reporting on implementation. The organizational performance of UNICEF is assessed by means of the mid-term review of the MTSP and implementation of the multi-year evaluation plan.

29. Thus, there is an evaluation function being performed at each of the three results management levels. The main purpose of the evaluation function is to inform decision-making and distil lessons learned to be used for future planning at each level of results management within the organization. It should be noted that different evaluation approaches and methodologies need to be applied in order to respond to the needs of each level of management. Moreover, for each level, the evaluation function addresses the needs of different networks of decision makers. At the activity/project level, the users of evaluation are the stakeholders, the project team and the country management team (CMT). At the level of the country programme of cooperation, those directly interested in evaluation of the country programme are the national authorities, the CMT, the regional office and headquarters. Organizational management-level evaluations are of interest to the Executive Board, senior management at headquarters and regional offices.

E. Accountability for the evaluation function

30. The decentralization of the evaluation function is a singular characteristic of the UNICEF evaluation system compared to other international organizations. The country office conducts most of the evaluation work. Regional offices provide oversight and support for evaluations undertaken by the country offices. Regional offices also conduct thematic evaluations related to their regional strategies. Headquarters divisions undertake evaluations relating to their areas of expertise. The Evaluation Office provides functional leadership and overall management of the evaluation system. It also conducts and commissions evaluations.

31. In each country office, an evaluation focal point is accountable to the country representative, who reports annually to the regional director on evaluation findings. Each regional office has a monitoring and evaluation officer who coordinates evaluation work performed by the country offices and their own regional office. The regional director provides annually a report to the Executive Board on MTRs and major evaluations. From a headquarters perspective, the Executive Director reports on evaluation matters to the Executive Board in the context of part II of her annual report.

32. It is the role of UNICEF country representatives to ensure that adequate UNICEF staff resources are dedicated to evaluation, that communication with government officials and other partners facilitates the evaluation process, and that evaluation findings inform the decision-making process. Particularly critical in this is the oversight responsibility that UNICEF representatives have concerning the articulation of the IMEP and the respect for quality in the conduct of evaluations (according to the standards and norms set by the Evaluation Office). The representatives also have to ensure that their annual reports highlight the main evaluation findings and that evaluation reports are registered in the UNICEF evaluation database. Key evaluation activities carried out by the country office are to: develop and update an IMEP; ensure the conduct of evaluations and studies in accordance with the plan, including design, coordination and implementation; ensure the quality and appropriate use of evaluative activities, including MTRs; monitor the effectiveness and relevance of the UNICEF country programme; ensure follow-up of evaluation recommendations; and channel evaluative results into the development of programme strategies and policies.

33. The evaluation function at the regional level focuses on strengthening the monitoring and evaluation capacities of UNICEF offices and their government counterparts through the following: coordination with the Evaluation Office at headquarters; preparation of regional evaluation plans; provision of technical assistance and oversight to support effective monitoring and evaluation of country projects and programmes; and preparation and review of training plans. In accordance with their regional evaluation plans, the regional offices undertake thematic evaluations. They ensure the contribution of their respective region to global evaluations led by the Evaluation Office, and are also responsible for the conduct and oversight of country programme evaluations. The Regional Management Team plays a key role in establishing regional evaluation priorities. Key evaluation activities carried out by the regional office are to: coordinate the review of MTRs and major evaluation reports in the region, in cooperation with Programme Division and the Evaluation Office, and submit reports on results to the Executive Board; monitor evaluation activities and review evaluation reports in the

region to ensure quality and relevance; ensure the evaluation of regional and multi-country initiatives within the region; synthesize evaluation results and lessons within the region; monitor the quality and use of evaluation results to strengthen programmes within the region; and facilitate the exchange of relevant information and experience in the region.

34. At headquarters, the Director of the Evaluation Office is responsible for overall development and implementation of the evaluation work plan, and reports to the Deputy Executive Director, Programme and Strategic Planning. The Evaluation Office has the following accountabilities: to conduct evaluations; and to seek to reinforce the organization's capacity to address evaluation needs, with an emphasis on the requirements of country offices and capacity-building in countries, in accordance with decisions made by the Executive Board and the Economic and Social Council. The Office provides technical guidance for a comprehensive system of performance management and leadership in the development of the corresponding approaches, methodologies and training for policy, strategic, programme and project evaluations. It monitors and reviews the quality of UNICEF-sponsored evaluations. The Office advises UNICEF senior management on the results of evaluations and related studies, with particular attention to the relevance of these results for organizational processes and policy development. The Office maintains the organizational database of evaluations and research studies, ensures access by UNICEF offices and promotes their dissemination and utilization through all available channels. The Office also collaborates with other United Nations agencies to increase the harmonization of evaluation activities and guidelines through the Inter-agency Working Group on Evaluation. The Evaluation Office is responsible for coordination at the global level with donors, major non-governmental organizations and other partners on the evaluation activities of programmes funded by donors or executed jointly with other organizations.

IV. Measures taken to strengthen the evaluation function

A. Weaknesses that need to be addressed

35. The last systematic and comprehensive review of the quality of evaluations conducted by UNICEF was undertaken in 1995. The objective of that review was to assess the relevance, quality and usefulness of UNICEF-supported evaluations and studies. Other objectives of the review included the estimation of the proportion of impact evaluations and the usefulness of non-impact evaluations and studies, the cost/benefit ratio, the issue of quantitative versus qualitative approaches and the role in capacity-building, and the validation of the evaluation database in terms of the classification of the reports registered.

36. The reviewers concluded that the database was fairly accurate in the classification of the reports. It was found that 15 per cent of all reports registered and 35 per cent of the evaluations recorded dealt with the impact of UNICEF-funded activities. The review showed that 91 per cent of the non-impact evaluations and 31 per cent of the studies had relevant findings for possible reformulation of UNICEF-supported projects or programmes. Only 10 per cent of all reports were deemed worthless, and over 27 per cent of the sample reviewed were judged unjustified in terms of costs relative to objectives and actual outcomes. Very few studies and

evaluations appeared to have specific and substantial capacity-building components. Six out of every seven studies used quantitative methods, but useful qualitative insights were also derived from most of the reports. Regarding the overall quality of the reports, 3 per cent were inadequate, 29 per cent were poor, 28 per cent were considered fair, 25 per cent were assessed as good and 15 per cent were rated excellent. The reviewers felt that the most common reasons for inadequate reporting might have been the lack of communication between consultants and UNICEF officers, and the lack of foresight (no baseline data, insufficient time and resource allocation or inadequate competence of the investigators in the field under study).

37. In 2000, a review of the UNICEF evaluation database was conducted. It found that the database had recorded some 11,000 evaluations and studies of UNICEF-supported projects and programmes since 1987. In 1992, the Executive Board requested the development of an enhanced database (decision 1992/24). A test version was first released in 1993, under the DOS environment, followed by a complete release in 1994. A CD-ROM was distributed in 1995 containing all of the information in the database. A new version was prepared in 1996 in the Windows format based on inputs from country and regional offices. Updated CD-ROMs were released in 1997, 1998 and 1999. At the beginning of 2002, the Intranet version of the evaluation database was released, allowing real-time, on-line access. Despite the long history of the evaluation database, the 2000 review revealed that it was not as widely known or used in UNICEF as had been expected.

38. In 1990, the Executive Board, noting the importance of evaluation as a management tool in improving programme effectiveness, requested that monitoring and evaluation plans and structures be elaborated and included in all country plans and major projects presented to it (decision 1990/4). In 1993, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to ensure that country programme evaluations became an integral part of the country programme exercise, with a view to providing better assessments of the performance of the Fund (E/ICEF/1993/14, decision 1993/5). In the 1990s, the Office of Evaluation and Research piloted five evaluations of country programmes. Some country offices also experimented with approaches to the self-evaluation of country programmes. In 2001, the Evaluation Office undertook the evaluation of two country programmes. It is presently conducting the evaluation of the programme of cooperation with the Pacific island countries at the request of the Executive Board.

39. Due to the lack of systematization of the use of the evaluation function at each level of management, evaluations were being conducted mostly at the project level. This explains why over the past years, there has been little reporting on global evaluations. In addition, the lack of systematic use of country programme evaluations explains the discrepancies in the level, depth and scope of the annual MTRs and major evaluations. With the introduction of the MTSP-related multi-year evaluation plan, the eventual conduct of country programme evaluations by regional offices and the increase in the quality of project/activity evaluations led by country offices, there is a high expectation that organizational reporting on results at all levels of management will be enhanced significantly. The challenges during the MTSP period require that UNICEF go beyond the number, quality and use of evaluations at the individual project level to managing the evaluation process itself more systemically and effectively at country, regional and global levels. More emphasis needs to be placed on assessing the results, impact and effects of

programmes and on evaluating country programmes as a whole, as well as assessing the impact of global policies.

B. Strengthening of in-country evaluation capacity

40. Two Economic and Social Council decisions request that particular attention be given to capacity-building in member countries. The first decision states that greater emphasis should be given to helping countries evaluate their programmes themselves and strengthen their own continuing evaluation machinery. The second decision indicates that further work should be undertaken in evaluation, particularly in relation to strengthening national capacities for evaluation and laying the basis for sound programming. UNICEF support to national evaluative activities is anchored at the country level, where the UNICEF country office plans, implements, monitors and follows up on activities of cooperation with the Government.

41. At the regional level, UNICEF has been supporting the formation of evaluation associations, facilitating the collaboration and mutual strengthening of professional evaluators at the national level. In compliance with a decision of the Executive Board requesting that particular support be provided to African countries, the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office has been involved in the formation and strengthening of the African Evaluation Association and has provided secretarial support for the articulation of a professional code, the setting up of an evaluators roster and the hosting of annual meetings of the Association. Other regional offices have also been associated with the activities of regional evaluation associations, such as the Central American Evaluation Society and the Australian and Asian Evaluation Association.

C. Strengthening of the country offices

42. At the country programme level, the Evaluation Office has promoted the systematic use of the IMEP within the programme management cycle. Such an evaluation plan is a prerequisite to the gathering of key information necessary for a subsequent evaluation of the country programme. The IMEP is used to strengthen and link planning, monitoring, evaluation and research components of country programmes, and to provide a rational approach to trace relevant information supporting performance-related decision-making. The IMEP has also been adapted as a management tool for global-level programmes and initiatives, in particular for UNICEF efforts on HIV/AIDS. During 2001, IMEP methods and procedures were refined and integrated into the programme process and procedures training manuals. The Evaluation Office is further supporting the generalization of IMEP practices through the facilitation of regional training workshops as well as the dissemination of good practices.

43. The system of evaluation focal points in country offices was initiated in 1987 to strengthen the management of evaluation processes. In each office, a professional staff member is designated as the contact officer for evaluation matters. These focal points have the following responsibilities: to assist in designing, updating, implementing and monitoring plans to promote and support evaluations; to share evaluation results and disseminate lessons learned within the office and with partners for use in the programming process and project planning; and to prepare

proposals and coordinate the training of both government and UNICEF staff for improved monitoring and evaluation. In order to reinforce the identification of skills required, the Evaluation Office is preparing a competency profile for evaluation officers which will be used as technical selection criteria for staffing purposes and also as a benchmark for identifying training requirements.

D. Strengthening of the regional offices

44. The multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF noted that a gap exists in the UNICEF accountability system at the level of accounting for the impacts and effects of UNICEF-supported programmes. Although UNICEF is an agency with complex partnership arrangements and goals, more emphasis must be placed on evaluating country programmes. This emphasis can be enhanced by the development of a clearer and stronger role for headquarters and regional offices in ensuring that evaluation is an integral part of country programme management and in playing a challenge function to ensure that country office staff address strategic-level issues in evaluations. In collaboration with regional offices, the Evaluation Office is conducting pilot evaluations of country programmes. A methodological approach for the conduct of country programme evaluations will be prepared in 2003. It is expected that by 2004, the regional office will gradually assume responsibility for conducting the evaluation of country programmes more systematically.

45. Over the years, regional offices have given attention to the function of monitoring the situation of children and programme performance. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of regional offices in evaluation. Regional monitoring and evaluation officers have to acquire the skills necessary for the conduct of complex evaluations. This is important in light of the thematic evaluations to be conducted by regional offices as contributions within the multi-year evaluation plan in the context of the MTSP, as well as in undertaking country programme evaluations.

E. Strengthening of New York headquarters

46. During 2001, the evaluation function at headquarters was re-engineered for the purpose of enabling UNICEF to use evaluation more strategically. In the context of the reorganization of the Programme Group, the Evaluation and Research Section of the EPP Division became the Evaluation Office, reporting to the Deputy Executive Director, Programme and Strategic Planning. The Office is now more independent and better positioned to contribute at the strategic level. The evaluation function at headquarters will focus on the country programme level and on the institutional management of the organization as a whole. For the latter purpose, the Evaluation Office has prepared a multi-year evaluation plan in the context of the MTSP. It is presented in paragraphs 50-57 below.

47. A senior-level Evaluation Committee will be created to deal with evaluation matters. It will be the formal forum that reviews evaluation reports and decides on the approval of the recommendations contained therein. The Evaluation Committee will also review the annual follow-up reports on implementation of the recommendations. It will examine evaluation reports that have relevance at the global governance level. The reports produced by the Evaluation Office, as well as those produced by other headquarters divisions, will be reviewed. The Evaluation

Committee will also review thematic evaluations conducted by the regional offices, as well as evaluations of country programmes of cooperation.

F. Fortifying management of the evaluation function

48. The evaluation function in UNICEF looks at activities undertaken or supported by UNICEF, examining their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Because of its important contribution to organizational learning, evaluation feedback is an integral part of the programme process. For the purpose of improving organizational learning and improving performance, in 2001, the Evaluation Office created a real-time, on-line Intranet access to the UNICEF organizational memory on performance, findings and lessons learned. The evaluation and research database is particularly tailored to the needs of UNICEF field offices. It allows users to access abstracts and full reports of evaluations and studies conducted by UNICEF and other organizations. It also serves as a reference source on methodological tools. In addition, the website allows electronic conferencing to foster professional exchange on performance assessment matters.

49. Another measure that will fortify the evaluation function is the approval of the competency profile for the different levels of evaluation positions, which will provide clearer technical criteria to select candidates. The competency profile will also be used to assess the training needs of present incumbents. The Evaluation Office will provide a technical assessment of the candidates. It will also maintain a network communication and exchange with evaluation officers, and provide them with updates on evaluation findings, events and methodologies on an ongoing basis.

V. Multi-year evaluation plan in support of the medium-term strategic plan

50. The MTSP seeks to combine a reinforced results-oriented management approach with a human rights-based approach to planning and programming. The MTSP establishes five organizational priorities; defines more clearly strategic objectives and indicators; and strengthens the strategic use of the evaluation function. The five organizational priorities are girls' education; integrated early childhood development (ECD); immunization "plus"; fighting HIV/AIDS; and improved protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination. The strategies that UNICEF will use to pursue the organizational priorities include programme excellence; effective country programmes of cooperation; partnerships for shared success; influential information, communication and advocacy; and excellence in internal management and operations.

51. During the period of the MTSP, the evaluation function will focus on the country programme level and institutional management of the organization as a whole. It will look at the rationale, effectiveness, and administrative efficiency and economy of activities undertaken or supported by UNICEF. Thus, the organization will enhance accountability and performance in terms of managing for results for the benefits of children. The organizational priorities of the MTSP will guide the parameters of the multi-year evaluation plan. Evaluations will be conducted with an emphasis on programmes, and organizational and policy considerations. Where

possible and feasible, UNICEF will participate in joint evaluations with United Nations agencies and other partners. UNICEF will have opportunities to collaborate with the OECD/DAC evaluation group on thematic evaluations such as the current one on basic education. In the context of the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), country programmes can be evaluated taking a United Nations system perspective. UNICEF can participate in multi-stakeholder evaluations such as those assessing the impact of sector-wide approaches. At a national level, UNICEF can contribute to thematic and sectoral evaluations involving the Government and other partners. On the basis of information needs for organizational decision-making, the types of contribution may range from desk reviews of existing evaluations and lessons learned to formal exercises involving stakeholders.

A. Evaluation of the organizational priorities

52. The five organizational priorities of the MTSP will guide the preparation of the annual global evaluation work plan. This annual global plan will incorporate the evaluation work led by headquarters, with contributions from the regions. At the end of the year, a summary of findings and lessons learned will be prepared and disseminated. Major findings will be incorporated in part II of the Executive Director's annual report.

53. The following thematic evaluation activities are planned during the period of the MTSP:

2002-2003	HIV/AIDS	Lessons learned from the evaluation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
		Methodology for assessing behavioural and institutional outcomes
	Child protection	Education as prevention against child labour
	Immunization "plus"	Evaluation of selected programmes
	Integrated ECD	Methodology for country case studies
		Baseline for the case studies
2004-2005	Integrated ECD	Evaluation of ECD case studies
		Evaluation of Integrated Management of Childhood Illness case studies
	HIV/AIDS	Evaluation of behavioural and institutional outcomes
	Girls' education	African Girls' Education Initiative
	Child protection	Desk review of project review and lessons learned
		Evaluation of mainstreaming in country programmes

B. Evaluation of the country programme of cooperation

54. Evaluation of the country programme of cooperation will become a systematized feature of the country programme process by the end of the four-year MTSP period. During the first two years of the MTSP, the Evaluation Office at headquarters, in cooperation with regional offices, will develop basic principles and methodologies, and will conduct a limited number of field tests. As of the third year of the MTSP, regional offices will assume full responsibility in this regard. The process will take into account the CCA/UNDAF and explore possibilities for the conduct of such exercises in this context. Tools for real-time evaluation of country programmes in the early crisis phase will also be developed and tested by the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the Office of Internal Audit, the Office of Emergency Programmes and regional offices. The planned schedule of activities is as follows:

2002-2003	Evaluation of country programmes	Methodology and pilot cases
	Evaluation of a country programme in a crisis situation	Methodology and testing
2004-2005	Evaluation of country programmes	Training and full introduction
	Evaluation of a country programme in a crisis situation	Real-time evaluation to be used in the context of a major humanitarian crisis

C. Evaluation of organizational performance

55. The strategies used to implement the MTSP will guide the choice of functional and topical evaluations. Evaluation activities will be conducted for the purpose of assessing organizational performance in the context of excellence in internal management, advocacy and partnerships. In 2002, the Evaluation Office is conducting an evaluation of an information system (ChildInfo) and, in 2003, it will examine strategic considerations of the supply function.

D. Easier access to the organizational memory

56. During the MTSP period, the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the UNICEF evaluators network, will improve the dissemination of monitoring and evaluation tools and findings from evaluation and research. In collaboration with the Division of Human Resources, an effort will be made to provide basic and advanced training in evaluation. In 2002, a web version of the training manual will be posted on the evaluation Intranet site. Over the 2002-2003 period, training sessions will be offered in each region to ensure that each incumbent in an evaluation position meets the technical criteria, in accordance with the competency profile of the position.

57. The launching of the evaluation website last February enables UNICEF to provide access to the organizational memory of the evaluation and research database on the desktop or laptop of each UNICEF employee. UNICEF staff can now review and download evaluation tools and methodological references. Taking advantage of

the reports contained in the evaluation and research database, desk reviews will be conducted to distil lessons learned by themes, sectors and topics related to the MTSP priorities. In addition, the UNICEF evaluation website provides links to all major evaluation websites. This is a priceless support tool made available to each country office.

VI. Draft recommendation

58. Evaluation activities conducted during the 1990s have had a noticeable impact on the quality of the organization's work and thinking in those fields that were the major emphasis of past evaluation efforts. The challenge now is to ensure that evaluation efforts and results are given greater importance across all fields of activity and at all levels of management in a more systematic and strategic way.

59. Therefore, the Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board adopt the following draft recommendation:

The Executive Board

Endorses the "Report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan" (E/ICEF/2002/10) as the official policy statement on the evaluation system of UNICEF.